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SANTA CLARA VALLEY AUDUBON SOCIETY

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December 1950

A FIELD TRIP TO LAKE MERRITT in Oakland will be taken this next Sunday, December 3, with Grace Brubaker and Elsie Hoeck as leaders. The Duck Feeding Station at the Lake attracts large numbers of ducks and makes it possible to get close-up views of half a dozen or more kinds. Last December a bird count at Lake Merritt listed fifty-two species, including land birds at Lakeside Park. The meeting place for the trip will be at Lake Merritt, in front of the Oakland Public Museum, on Oak St., at 9:30 a.m. Bring picnic lunch. San Jose members who want transportation meet at N.E. corner of Santa Clara and 13th Streets at 8 o'clock; Palo Alto members at S. P. Station at the same time.

THE DECEMBER MEETING will be held Monday, December 11, at 7:30 o'clock, in Room 210, Science Building, San Jose State College. Lina Snow and Fannie Zwaal will talk briefly about the Wren-tit and the Plain Titmouse, as part of a series of five-minute talks on bird identification which Agnes Prusman, Program Chairman for the San Jose meetings, is planning for this year. Our speaker for the evening will be Dr. William Graf, of the Science Department of San Jose State College, who will discuss informally some aspects of "Man in the Bird's Environment."

OUR TWENTIETH CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT will be taken Sunday, December 31, in the San Jose area, with Anne Peterson as leader. The meeting place will be in San Jose, at corner of E. San Carlos and Fifth Streets, at 8 a.m. Bring along a picnic lunch. At the meeting place Mrs. Peterson will explain the rules of the count and outline the procedure to be followed. She urges all members to participate. Aside from the scientific value it can have, a bird count is lots of fun—a sort of game to see how many species of birds and how many individuals of each species can be recorded in one day in a given area. Choosing an area which includes as many types of bird habitats as possible is part of the game. According to the rules of the count, prescribed by National Audubon Society, "the area must fall within a circle of fifteen miles in diameter," and the day for counting birds in that area must come between Christmas and New Year's. After the count Grace Brubaker has invited the participants to come to her home, 191 Mt. View Av., at 3:30 o'clock, to summarize the count. For further information, telephone Mrs. Homer Peterson, Cypress 3-1077.

REPORT OF FIELD TRIP TAKEN OCTOBER 1. When the scheduled trip to Alder-croft Heights had to be cancelled at the last minute, the twenty members who had assembled at the meeting place, voted for Mount Hermon. However we found our best birding at Camp Evers, where the Mount Hermon Road turns off from the Los Gatos-Santa Cruz Highway. Here we walked out a side road to the blueberry farm. The road is no more than a lane along the edge of a weedy field, with brush and a few trees on its other side. It crosses a willow-lined creek which drains a peaty bog in the center of the field; and farther on it circles back of the berry patch where there is a steep hill with some yellow pines. Roadside weeds which had gone to seed were attracting a very large flock of chattering Pine Siskins, some Green-backed Goldfinches and House Finches, and a few Willow Goldfinches. In the brush on the other side were at least a dozen Song Sparrows, among many White-crowned Sparrows, and one Lark Sparrow. Several Audubon's Warblers were feeding on the berries of a wax myrtle.

The myrtle was a surprise, tucked into a clump of live oaks, madrones, and a Douglas fir. Two summer resident birds—birds which nest in California but migrate south after the nesting season—were seen here: five Vaux's Swifts, which flew overhead and were soon out of sight, and a Yellow Warbler foraging in the willows. Another late summer resident, the Western Flycatcher, was seen afterwards at Mount Hermon. (The day before, while scouting the Aldercroft trip, Walter Dowdy noted a small flycatcher; also Pileolated Warbler and Russet-backed Thrush.)

At Mount Hermon we found many Chestnut-backed Chickadees clinging to the opening cones of Douglas firs, evidently picking out the seeds, for seed wings would occasionally come fluttering down. There seems to be a good crop of Douglas fir cones this year—and also redwood cones. Siskins were as busy getting seeds from the tiny redwood cones as they had been at Camp Evers getting weed seeds. At lunch time, in Mr. and Mrs. John Boylan's garden, Mrs. Boylan told us that very few chickadees had been coming for the suet and walnut meats which she sets out for them, since the Douglas fir cones had ripened.

Birds observed at Camp Evers: Red-tailed Hawk, 1; Sparrow Hawk, 1; Cal. Quail, flock of 40+; Killdeer, several; Vaux's Swift, 5; Red-shafted Flicker, 3; Black Phoebe, 1, singing; Chestnut-backed Chickadee, 3; Plain Titmouse, 2; Wren-tit, 1, singing; Bewick's Wren, 1, singing; Mockingbird, 1; W. Bluebird, flock of 12; Cedar Waxwing, 2; Hutton's Vireo, 1; Yellow Warbler, 1; Audubon's Warbler, 3; W. Meadowlark, 9, some singing; Redwinged Blackbird, song heard from bog; Brewer's Blackbird, flock of about 30; House Finch, 9; Pine Siskin, flock of 50+; Willow Goldfinch, 3; Green-backed Goldfinch, 20+; Spotted Towhee, 1; Brown Towhee, 3; Lark Sparrow, 1; White-crowned Sparrow, many; Song Sparrow, 12+. E.S.

ARRIVAL DATES FOR WINTER VISITANT BIRDS. The first report of the arrival of a winter visitant in our area came from Grace Brubaker, who had White-crowned Sparrows in her garden in east San Jose, Sept.17. Golden-crowned Sparrows were singing near Saratoga, Sept.23; and the day before, in the same place, a small flock of Cedar Waxwings were feeding in a fig tree. On Sept.20 a Townsend's Warbler was seen at Mrs. Boylan's in Mt. Hermon. Audubon's Warblers were on our field trip list for Camp Evers, Oct.1. When Walter Dowdy was scouting a trip at Aldercroft Heights, Sept.30, he spotted two Fox Sparrows and two Red-breasted Sapsuckers. Lina Snow reported Hermit Thrush at her home on Oct.8, and Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Oct.14. An early record for Varied Thrushes came from Al Wool—Oct.5, near Mission Peak. About a dozen of these handsome cousins of the robin were seen in Big Basin State Park, Oct.10. Many other reports of seeing these thrushes this fall is good news, after their scarcity last year. Three migrants which are rarely seen in our area brought excited telephone calls. Grace Brubaker had a White-throated Sparrow eating crumbs she had set out, Oct.14 and during the following week; Mrs. Boylan and others saw Evening Grosbeaks eating maple seeds at Mt. Hermon, Oct.30; and Mary Ellen Shore, near summit of the Santa Cruz Mts., had a Slate-colored Junco, with Oregon Juncos, at her feed tray, Nov.10. E.S.

SANTA CLARA VALLEY AUDUBON SOCIETY, Branch of NATIONAL AUDUBON SOCIETY

Monthly Meetings Second Monday, Alternately in San Jose and Palo Alto

President -- Albert J. Wool - Rt. 3, Box 271A, Quimby Rd., San Jose
Corr. Sec. - Miss Eva Allen - 123 East Charles St., Los Gatos